

The North School

Essella Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8AL

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement of students at the school is inadequate. Standards have not risen over recent years and progress in both English and mathematics is significantly below average. Many groups of students underachieve, including the more able and those for whom the school receives pupil premium support. Students' progress in literacy is inadequate.
- Teaching is inadequate because in too many lessons students do not make enough progress. Teachers' expectations are too low and, in some lessons, students' behaviour is not managed effectively.
- The behaviour and safety of the students at the school are inadequate. Persistent low-level disruption in lessons contributes to reduced learning, a significant minority of students show a lack of respect for others and there are parts of the school where some students feel unsafe.
- The quality of leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders and managers have not been effective in improving achievement, teaching is inadequate and behaviour is not managed effectively. Governance is inadequate as governors have not been successful in ensuring that the school improves quickly enough.
- The capacity of leaders and managers to bring about further improvement is inadequate because there is no track record of improvement in the key areas. Significant progress has been made in only one of the four issues for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. The school's checks on how well it is doing are not rigorous; for example, the school is inaccurate in its judgement of the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths:

- The school has been successful in its various strategies to improve attendance. Attendance is now around the national average.
- The school offers a good range of vocational provision.
- The provision for students with autism who attend the Laurel Centre is good. It is well led and the students make good progress.
- The sixth form is a relative strength and is developing well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 48 part-lessons, six of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed an assembly and students' behaviour around the school site.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work, other staff with positions of responsibility and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school's own checks on how well it is doing, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in different subjects across different year groups.
- Inspectors took into account the responses of 69 parents to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire as well as the school's own parental surveys and questionnaires completed by 54 members of staff.

Inspection team

Steve Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Val Fehners

Additional Inspector

Keith Homewood

Additional Inspector

Josephine Lewis

Additional Inspector

Cliff Walker

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls.
- Standards on entry are significantly below the national average.
- Just over one in 10 students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is lower than the national average.
- A small proportion of students speak English as an additional language, and a small proportion of these are at an early stage of learning English.
- A much higher proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium than is the case nationally. This provides additional funding for specific groups including students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families. Almost 30% of the school population is eligible for free school meals and there are 14 looked after children and 10 children of service families.
- A high proportion of Year 7 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. Over a quarter of students are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs which is much higher than usually found.
- The Laurel Centre is a specialist on-site provision responsible for meeting the needs of 24 students with autistic spectrum disorder. These students, who have statements of special educational needs, are supported by the Laurel Centre staff and spend some time in the centre. However, all 24 students have personalised timetables and spend most of their time in mainstream classes.
- The school manages its own alternative, off-site educational provision.
- The school is part of the Ashford Teaching Alliance, a collaborative partnership of local schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan their lessons to take account of the needs of different groups of students
 - have higher expectations of both achievement and behaviour of students in lessons
 - make lessons more interesting in order to engage students more effectively in learning.
- Improve achievement and ensure that it is consistent across all groups of students and across all subjects by:
 - ensuring that teachers have accurate information on the standards and progress of the students they teach and use this information effectively in their teaching and marking of work
 - improving students' literacy skills so that they are better equipped to make progress in all

subjects

- tackling underachievement of particular groups of students, particularly those who are eligible for pupil premium funding
- reviewing the policy for early GCSE entry to ensure that students attain to their potential, particularly so that more-able students achieve the high grades.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of the pupils at the school by:
 - dealing effectively with low-level disruption in lessons and behaviour around the school
 - taking action to ensure that all students feel safe in all parts of the school site.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - focusing more intensively on raising achievement and improving teaching as the key priorities for leaders and managers at all levels
 - strengthening monitoring and evaluation so that leaders and managers at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what to do to improve
 - improving robustness and accuracy in the monitoring of teaching and providing high-quality support to help individual teachers to improve
 - ensuring governors are more effective in holding to account leaders and managers in school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because students are making poor progress in English and mathematics and many other subjects.
- Although girls achieve better than boys, their progress is still significantly below average. More-able students in particular are significantly underachieving and students with low levels of literacy are not given enough support and, consequently, they make little progress. Variations in rates of progress between groups means that the school is not delivering equality of opportunity.
- The school has not been successful in closing the gap between the achievement of those students eligible for pupil premium funding and others. The school is now providing additional support for those in Year 7 with low attainment in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 who are eligible for catch-up funding, and for students eligible for pupil premium funding. However, there is no evidence of impact.
- Students for whom the school receives additional funding through their pupil premium achieve GCSE results around a grade lower in English and around half a grade lower in mathematics than other students.
- The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is well below the national average, and significantly below what it should be when taking into account the students' starting points when they enter the school in Year 7.
- Students are entered early for their GCSEs in English and mathematics but with limited success. The policy hampers their achievement overall, especially for more-able students, too many of whom do not go on to gain a higher grade if they have already gained a C at the first attempt.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement. Although AS-level results improved in 2013 and students are now beginning to make good progress in many of their lessons, A-level results last year were not good enough. Too few students were successful in their GCSE retakes in English and mathematics.
- The achievement of students with autistic spectrum disorder in the Laurel Centre is good. As a result of good teaching and specialist support, they make good progress.
- Students make good progress in modern foreign languages and progress in science is in line with the national average.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because teachers do not take enough account of the needs of different groups of students, expectations are too low and, in some lessons, behaviour is not managed effectively; as a result, students too often make poor progress. In too many lessons, students are not provided with enough challenge to engage their interest and to enable them to make good progress.
- Teachers do not take the opportunity to improve students' reading and writing skills often enough. They do not consistently ensure that teaching assistants help students with special educational needs, and those eligible for pupil premium funding, to make better progress.
- Performance management systems are now well established and there is regular monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior leaders. However, because senior leaders do not have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school, teachers do not know what to do to improve their teaching.
- The teaching of English often fails to engage the students and does not provide enough interest and challenge, particularly for the more-able. Even in the better lessons, the pace is sometimes slow and students' attention falters.
- In mathematics, teaching is better. While, in the recent past, too many students, particularly the more-able, have not reached their potential, teachers are now providing more challenge for

these students in their lessons. Students are encouraged to use investigative approaches and apply mathematical skills to solve problems and this is beginning to increase progress.

- In the better lessons, students are encouraged to draw on their prior learning as they extend their knowledge and develop new skills. Teachers plan the next steps in learning on the basis of a sound understanding of students' individual needs. In a dance lesson where teaching was outstanding, there was strong student involvement in the learning. As a result of dynamic collaborative working and the teacher's highly effective support for learning and individual attention to students, they made outstanding progress in developing their practical skills.
- In the sixth form, teaching is often good. Good relationships enable teachers to provide effective targeted support, while open questioning and dialogue are strong features of sixth form teaching. These features are leading to improving progress.
- In the Laurel Centre, students benefit from good quality, specialist teaching and individual support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Behaviour and safety are inadequate because students' progress in lessons is too often adversely affected by some students' disruptive behaviour. There are too many incidents of poor behaviour on the school site and there are parts of the school where some students feel unsafe.
- Where poor behaviour occurs in lessons, teachers are often unable to manage it effectively. Students agree that poor behaviour inhibits learning. Behaviour in lessons gets better as students progress through the school, although remains inadequate overall.
- The school keeps effective track of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. The school's records of incidents and data on fixed-term exclusions and referrals to the inclusion room, where students who disrupt learning are moved to, show that behaviour is not improving. Fixed-term exclusions remain high and there is a disproportionately high percentage of those with high levels of special educational needs who experience fixed-term exclusions.
- The school has taken steps to ensure that the attendance of students is tracked efficiently and has been effective in working in partnership with parents and carers and other agencies to follow up instances where there are concerns about the absence of specific students. As a result, attendance has improved, and is now around the national average.
- The school is very diligent in ensuring that students learn about how to keep themselves safe and has placed particular emphasis on ensuring that students learn about e-safety and what to do about different types of bullying, particularly through the 'learning to learn' programme.
- Parents and carers are divided in their views as to whether the school ensures that its pupils are well behaved and how well the school deals with bullying; however, the majority agree that their child feels safe in school.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders and managers have not been effective enough in improving achievement, teaching and behaviour in the school. Although governors are supportive and committed to the school, they have not promoted improvement quickly enough. Consequently, the school has declined from being satisfactory at the previous inspection. School leaders are not demonstrating that they can make improvements.
- Leaders and managers have not made accurate judgements in their evaluation of the school's performance and are not sufficiently clear as to what to do to improve the school. Although each faculty has a raising attainment plan linked to the whole-school development plan, and some of the faculties have appropriate improvement strategies, leaders and managers at all levels have an inaccurate view of achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour. Too little is done by middle leaders, such as of faculties, to share good practice, so improvement is often slow.
- There are elaborate procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, but the judgements are not accurate and do not lead to significant improvement. There is an extensive programme of professional development but this is not raising achievement. Performance management procedures do not ensure teachers know what to do to improve their teaching.

- The curriculum has some strengths. The sports specialism has been an important driver for the school and, last year, the route of the Olympic torch took in the school, and students attended the Paralympics. The school farm makes a positive contribution to students' learning. Students are generally guided well in their subject choices and provided with effective advice to help them to move on to the next stage in their education or training.
- There is a coordinated approach to meeting the needs of students with special educational needs and those eligible for support through the pupil premium funding. This is because the inclusion manager works with heads of faculties. However, this approach is not effective because it has not succeeded in closing the attainment gap between pupil premium students and others, and the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is too slow. The Laurel Centre is well led and it enables students with autistic spectrum disorder to make good progress.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form require improvement because achievement in the sixth form is not yet good enough. However, progress has been made in ensuring students are on the right courses. Leaders and managers have ensured there is good provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, although a minority of students do not always treat others with respect. Tutor time is used for reflection, and 'learning to learn' activities make a good contribution to students' social development and employability skills. The school successfully celebrates diversity, and this was particularly strong at the time of the Paralympics.
- The local authority recognises that achievement is not good enough at the school and has provided support through school improvement visits. The school has not improved as a result.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are aware that GCSE performance is weak but have not provided sufficient challenge to staff to ensure that results improve rapidly enough. They are unclear about the priorities for improvement and are not fully aware of some of the areas where the school's performance is significantly worse than the national average.
 - Governors do not have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching or behaviour in the school, and this is not helped by inaccuracies in the monitoring judgements of the senior leadership team.
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities including safeguarding and child protection. Governors are thorough in reviewing and approving school policies. They acknowledge that they have not undertaken enough monitoring visits in the past and there has been insufficient monitoring of the pupil premium budget in order to assess the impact of this expenditure. Steps are now being taken to remedy this.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118832
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	428862
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,277
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cook
Headteacher	Lesley Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 March 2012
Telephone number	01233 614600
Fax number	01233 612906
Email address	north-school@north.kent.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

